

2nd Sunday Advent (C)

- One of the great joys & rewards of loving another person is being able to give ourselves to the one we love - & there is a wonderful peace & trusting surrender when we can do this simply & happily & without reserve.
- God is love & so, to speak in human terms, God needs to give.
- God created the universe so that he could embrace it with love.
- That's why he made us. But, something got in the road. We call it sin.
- It is part of the human condition & it comes from our origins, so we traditionally call it 'Original Sin'.
- We inherit it from our ancestors & so each of us has our own special mix of it – different tendencies & addictions & impulses that draw our hearts away from the love for which we are made.
- It forms a kind of environmental sludge that none of us can avoid & it is not long before we add our own personal 'stuff' & sins to it.
- It's a bit like an oil slick that clogs up the wings of a sea bird.
- The bird is fine. It is beautiful & is made to soar, but the sludge can make it very difficult, at times impossible, to do what it so longs to do & what its created for.
- We are made to be embraced by God & by the whole of creation, but we can feel quite trapped & weighed down, sometimes because of our own sin, but often because the sin that is part of the human condition makes it so hard to fly, so hard to breathe, so hard to love, so hard to live freely.
- Throughout Advent the Church offers for our reflection, poem after poem from the Old Testament.
- From their experience of God, the writers know that God longs to free them from the bondage of sin & its debilitating effects.
- They pray for the heavens to open up that the promised one, the Messiah, would come like dew on the grass to refresh their hearts.
- This is where today's readings come in - both the First Reading & the Psalm speak of the wonder of being released from slavery to truly live.
- In this season of Advent our thoughts are directed towards the Christ child - the simple, human way in which God came to us to induce us not to be afraid, but to change, reach out, & take the Christ child into our hearts.
- If there is any hesitation, it comes from us – that's why we pray in today's Prayer: 'Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy'.
- At Christmas God comes to us individually, as families, as a church, & to the whole world, in the simple, disarming form of a new-born babe.
- We all know the healing that the birth of a child can bring – how it can stop us in our tracks & change us.
- The grace of Christmas is the offer to each of us of a whole new beginning of hope.
- There are only two weeks till Christmas.

- God wants to come to us in a special way, so that we can hold him to our hearts.
- We can do this to the measure of our longing.
- If we are not longing for him & expecting him the way parents expect a child, & if we are not feeling the thirst of our hearts for him, Christmas will be a time when we are caught up in all the busy-ness & glitz, & have no time for prayer, to slow down & reflect & no opportunity to quench the thirst of our spirits.
- Longing & waiting patiently is important, but there are also things that have to be done.
- As the Gospel reminds us, areas of our life that are empty have to be filled up; & other areas that have received too much attention have to be flattened out - there can be a lot to be put into order.
- If we find ourselves walking on a winding path, it will have to be straightened, & rough roads will need to be smoothed.
- I am sure that each of us can find examples of the 'winding paths & rough roads' in our own lives.
- What is so encouraging about the first reading from Baruch is that we are told that God is going to do the levelling & the straightening; Paul has the same message - Perfect goodness is going to be produced in us by Jesus.
- But, we need to really want him to do it, & pray for his healing power to work in our lives, & be determined to follow his inspiration & to allow him to open our minds, soften our hearts & challenge our priorities.
- Why leave our spirits parched like a desert for another year?
- In the opening prayer for this Mass we said, "God of power & mercy, open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy."
- When we are called to 'Prepare a way for the Lord' it is a call to prepare a way in our own hearts – to break down the barriers that we have put up; to clear the obstacles that we have placed in the path.
- God's love will find a way! We simply make the way easier for ourselves to recognise God's love if we 'Prepare a way'.
- In order for this to happen, we need to make room for God, make time for being together with our faith community, for prayer, for hearing the word of God, for being with our families – for the change to occur that we might be more receptive to God & for what God can do in us.
- In the words of Cardinal Newman: "To be human is to change; to be perfect is to have changed often".